

An Open Letter
to my Fellow-members of
The Theosophical Society

LETTER NO. 7

MAY 10th, 1939

DEAR BRETHREN,

How very very much I wish I could truly fulfil to the full the ideal functions of the President of The Theosophical Society by being able to enter into contact on the physical plane with every single member of The Society.

It is perfectly true that the President of our Society has always been in close personal touch with his fellow members, so far as the inner planes are concerned. But this is comparatively easy. How difficult it is, indeed how impossible it is, for me and each one of you who are members of our Society to come face to face with each other through our very physical bodies themselves !

Of course, in the waking consciousness I try to know you all individually. I think I succeed in knowing those with whom I

have made some physical contact during the course of my travels all over the world. I try constantly to conjure up pictures of the meetings which I have attended in country after country. Just for the moment I am vivifying my picture of a meeting of our brethren in Seattle (U.S.A.) which I addressed last year. The scene is very vivid and many of the members stand out very clearly. I can even make a partial contact with the general body of the audience. But there must needs be so many members whom I cannot meet, even in the countries I am able to visit, and I have, for various imperative reasons, been unable so far to visit either South Africa or Central and Southern America, as also various Lodges scattered about in the Far East and in Europe.

One of my reasons for being so eager to make this physical plane contact is that I know so ardently how extremely valuable are Theosophy and The Theosophical Society to every individual, to every nation, to every faith, throughout the world. And, I feel that I might intensify your own convictions with mine afire in Them, looking into your eyes, clasping your hands in brotherhood, and seeing you as your egos

need you down here in these times of stormy but quicker growth. Travelling as I do, and having, if I may say so, other means of knowledge still more accurate, I perceive the very great urgency of bringing Theosophy and The Theosophical Society within the knowledge of individuals, faiths and nations. I know so well that in the years to come, in the decades and centuries to come, we members of The Theosophical Society will be challenged by posterity as to how far we lived and, if necessary, died, for the truths intrusted to us to minister towards the salvation of the world on its new pilgrimage beginning with the 20th Century.

What sort of people were those Theosophists who lived in such a wonderful time, who had so wonderful a message to give to the world, who had such unique opportunities? It is easy for us today to look back upon the peaks of human civilization in the past and envy those who lived on the then summits. Today, in this veritable period of grace, we Theosophists are living amidst summits. Do we lift up our eyes unto the hills? Do we seek to ascend them? Are we, perchance, living on them worthily? Are we afire

with the righteousness intrusted to our spreading? Shall we in the not so very far distant future be weighed in the balance and be found wanting, or shall it be able to be said of us: "Well done!"?

It is far less our work to draw people into our ranks. It is far more our work to spread Theosophy outwards and to cause The Theosophical Society to be a strong band of prophets and builders and messengers of the newer Truth—the newer Truth which is so old.

The greater apostles of Theosophy and of The Theosophical Society have lived in our midst, within the actual physical presence of many of us. Many of us may have seen and heard them, and perchance there may be some of them still on duty on the physical plane itself. We may have accepted them or we may have rejected them. We may have persecuted them or we may have acclaimed them and followed them. Here have they been—in our midst, as other great forerunners of Light have been in the midst of the peoples of their times. If we look back upon any period in history, in which there has been one who has appeared suddenly to lift up

his torch, and if round him there have gathered those who did light their torches from his, and no less those who sought to quench with the waters of ignorance these fires of Truth, we are in fact looking back upon a period actually reproduced today perhaps in its veriest details. H. P. Blavatsky is the torch-bearer of these days. Around her gathered her apostles, or, if you prefer the words, fellow forerunners, and no less have there been those who have opposed her bitterly, crucifying her to her death, as there have been those to villify the comrades she herself chose to be with her on her great adventure.

This period of the world's history is no less wonderful, catastrophic, inspiring, marking the beginning of a new era in civilization, than any similar period that has preceded it. And the adventure is by no means over. The blood of the martyrs is now needed—not the blood of their dying but the blood of their living. Perhaps I should not call them martyrs. I only do so in the sense that they consider no offering as in any sense a sacrifice which is for the spreading far and wide of Theosophy and for the better being of The Theosophical Society.

In every Lodge we need whole-hearted members, no half-hearted members. And above all we need those who give no less richly than they receive, who are intent upon giving and giving and giving, even if there be no time left for getting.

As I am working here at Adyar, I almost feel overwhelmed by the urgency of spending every minute in spreading Theosophy and in strengthening The Theosophical Society to the high purposes to which it was dedicated at its birth in 1875. I grudge time spent on any other activity than that of giving Theosophy and strengthening our Society. I am always planning to do more than I do, for I feel that there has been no more critical point in sixty-four years of our Society's existence than the present crisis in which the world finds itself today. I am well aware of my inadequacies. I compare myself with my predecessors, obviously to my own disadvantage. I wish The Society had a better President. On the other hand, these comparisons and wishes only serve to stir me to greater efforts, and in the course of my being thus stirred I see with tremendous clearness how every single member of The Theosophical Society should, at such a

time as this, be stirred to the very depths of his own being. Indeed, I would almost go so far as to say that either a member is so stirred or his knowledge of Theosophy is static and lifeless, however intellectual it may be, and his membership of The Theosophical Society is hardly more than a name or a form.

We cannot be great Titans. But when the world is in a Titanic condition, we must at least be little Titans, and I would like to say with all possible emphasis that each member, whoever he may be, however recently he may have joined, however little he may know, has in him the power to be Titanic in some measure, or he would not be a member of The Theosophical Society at all. Of course there may be those exceptions who say that they cannot do anything to spread Theosophy or to vivify The Theosophical Society. There may be those who care for Theosophy and for their membership of The Society only as a personal satisfaction. But I hardly think there can be more than a handful of such members, for when the world is crying out so passionately for bread, those who have bread cannot keep it for themselves alone. The world is crying bitterly. We Theosophists, we members of The Theosophical

Society, are those who have the power to hear. Our ears are opened by Theosophy. They are opened by membership of The Theosophical Society. We cannot help hearing the cry of the world. Restless indeed should we be to meet the cry with such succour as we may be able to give.

So I look out upon the world, upon every country in the world, upon every Section in the world, upon every Lodge in the world, and upon every individual member in every Lodge, and I say to myself : First, am I doing the whole of my duty, with all intensity of enthusiasm, to every Section, to every Lodge, and to every member—shall I be weighed in the balance in the future and be found wanting in fulfilment of my office as President ; second, is every Section alive to its present duties towards the world, is every Lodge thus alive, is every member thus alive ?

Sometimes I read that such and such a Lodge is "active," and that such and such members are "active." *How* are they active ? Are they active in spreading Theosophy and in giving power to The Theosophical Society to do its duty to the world ? Or are they active in the sense that they have a good lecture syllabus, good

discussion classes and attendances of members? I am not saying a single word against the value of a first class lecture syllabus full of life and of the splendid revelation of Theosophy. I say nothing at all against the discussion class—this has its very great value. It is excellent that members should be regular in their attendance at gatherings of the Lodge. All these things keep alive the Theosophical fires in the locality and send the flames shooting up high. But apart from this particular doing, what is being done to vivify the surroundings, be these in terms of individuals, of local business, of civic activity, of the prevailing faiths, of the community as a whole in all its life-expressions?

When we spread Theosophy in a locality we are spreading peace, we are spreading happiness, we are spreading prosperity, we are spreading national and international goodwill. When we give to any locality a knowledge of what The Theosophical Society is and stands for, we are disclosing a living witness to the truth of Universal Brotherhood.

We Theosophists are indeed, or should be, the most practical of all people. We should be practical because we are living

links between the gifts of Heaven and the needs of Earth. We Theosophists know Heaven as, I venture to say, few others know Heaven. In other words, we know what must be the constituent elements of a really happy world. And here we are on earth itself to spread and to make active that knowledge. Never were the needs of earth greater than they are today. Here we are—*all of us*—with the precious gifts of Heaven. Indeed shall we be despised in times to come if we do not rise nobly and eagerly to the opportunities for the seizing of which we have been sent down here at such a time as this. Those who will come after us will say: "If only we had lived in those days, how differently we should have acted!" Do we not sometimes say these very words in the case of past periods when we think how differently we should have acted from those who perhaps were failures then?

The great traditions of our Theosophical Society are splendid. Little have they been marred by the weakness of any member of The Society who has gone before us. Shining and radiant they are. Let us carry on these traditions and in due time intrust them to our successors the

brighter for their having been intrusted to us. I think of all those who have made The Theosophical Society great in the world. We must see to it that The Society remains great. And then I think of the wonderful way in which the gifts of Theosophy have been poured upon the world. We have in fact, though some of us may not always realise it, a most precious literature. Our books may be compared most favourably with the greatest books written by any individual recognized by the world as great. And the great of our Society may no less compare favourably with the great of the outer world.

I am saying this in no measure of conceit or arrogant pride. I am saying this, because I want every member of The Society immensely to cherish the Movement to which he belongs, to be proud of it, always to speak of it with reverence, and be eager to defend it when it is attacked. I want him to be a happy and restless crusader for his Movement. I want him to love it ardently. Let it be his Supreme Love. And I want him to cherish with a most sacred reverence the mighty truths which we know under the name of Theosophy. I want him to feel

how glorious they are. I want him to be sure how glorious they are. I want him to be among the happiest on earth, envying none, because he has Theosophy and is a member of The Theosophical Society.

How I wish I could speak on the physical plane to every member of The Society and pour out upon him all that I feel, expressed so inadequately in these words above !

George S. Arundale